

Dr. Peterson

United Way Young Professionals Leaders Group “TED Talk”

6-7 p.m. Thursday, April 16, 2015, The Discovery Center, World Congress Center

Title Slide

Thank you for inviting me to join you this evening. I’m honored to be with all of you as young leaders in your jobs and in the Atlanta community. I want to share just of the few exciting things happening at Georgia Tech, and then I’m looking forward to listening to you.

Slide 2: President Obama Visit

You may have seen on the news—or perhaps were caught up in traffic—from President Obama’s visit to Georgia Tech on March 10th. A capacity crowd of 10,000, mostly Georgia Tech students, filled McCamish Pavilion to hear him. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students to hear and see a U.S. President in office. They were great sports. We couldn’t distribute the tickets until the Friday before. They stood in line on campus for about 3 hours to get a ticket. You could see the chairs move as they progressed through the line. The White House advance staff said they had never seen so many students studying in line. This is, after all, Georgia Tech!

Slide 3: About Georgia Tech

Georgia Tech has 23,000 students. We’re known globally for engineering and computer science, but we also have outstanding programs in architecture, sciences, business and liberal arts.

During the past two decades, Georgia Tech has grown into one of the world’s most globalized technological universities, with collaborations in more than 80 countries, and institutional partnerships in more than 30 countries. Along with our full campus in France, we have global centers in China, Singapore, Costa Rica, Panama, and Mexico. We have students from 115 countries. Almost half of our students have an international experience before graduation.

Slide 4: 2015 Freshman Class

Freshmen have very impressive academic credentials, but equally as impressive are the ways they have engaged in leadership, innovation, and community activities before they set foot on the campus. While they're very accomplished academically, leadership and their potential to take that to a new level at Georgia Tech is what sets them apart.

Slide 5: Student Engagement

We offer more than 400 student organizations to students. We have several platforms for student leadership development. Through our Grand Challenges Living Learning Communities, students live together in the same dorm and address one of society's grand challenges. Leading Edge provides for individual and team leadership coaching.

Slide 6: InVenture Prize 2015

We just held our sixth annual InVenture Prize competition on campus.

In fact, Lara O'Connor Hodgson served as a judge for the 2nd annual InVenture competition in 2010. It is the nation's largest undergraduate invention competition, and it is designed to foster the type of innovative thinking and entrepreneurial confidence in students that Lara has.

The contest has affectionately been called "American Idol for Geeks," but no one will think of them as geeks when they launch their businesses. InVenture's finals were carried live April 1 on Georgia Public Broadcasting, so a broader audience got to see some of the creativity that is part of everyday life at Georgia Tech. From more than 500 entrants, the FlameTech Grill Defender team emerged the winner for its life-safety device for gas grills that alerts users when gas levels have reached an unsafe threshold.

Second prize went to The OculoStaple team for developing a medical device to safely treat ptosis, drooping of the upper eyelid. The People's Choice team was equally as

impressive. The biomedical engineering majors developed Haplit, an interactive device for teaching Braille to those who were born blind or are living with degenerative disease.

We also run a K-12 school version of the InVenture Prize known as the InVenture Challenge @ Georgia High Schools, and for the first time we had several elementary schools that entered and sent teams to watch the finals. In addition, representatives from 12 other Atlantic Coast Conference institutions attended the finals and a conference the next day to begin planning for a possible ACC-wide innovation competition.

Slide 7: Student Innovation

InVenture is just one of several innovation competitions available to Georgia Tech students. Others include the Capstone Design Expo, Ideas to Serve (I2S), and the Convergence Innovation Competition (CIC). We're also proud of our innovation programs that help build entrepreneurial confidence, such as VentureLab, and Startup Summer.

Our goal is that when students walk across the stage at commencement, no matter their major, they'll be prepared to solve some of society's toughest challenges. The technology changes, but if they are taught the right thinking skills, they'll be prepared to tackle most anything. One of those graduates on May 2 is John Gattuso. He and another student, Rachel Ford signed up for the first Startup Lab offered at Tech. they're pictured in the lower photo. Startup Lab is an interdisciplinary class that focuses on teaching a process called "customer discovery" to students. Tech students are really good at coming up with new and novel technologies, but they often forget that these technologies must solve a problem in order to be valuable to someone, or to have a paying customer at the end of the day. Startup Lab focuses on teaching students to define a problem, and then to refine a solution tailored to fit the customers' needs.

One day, Rachel's check engine light came on when she was driving home, and she called John. It then hit them that this isn't just a problem that Rachel encountered - it happens to people all the time, and what's worse is that its ambiguity causes anxiety in drivers. Thus, FIXD was born. They like to say that your car has been talking to you, and now FIXD enables you to listen.

Since then, FIXD was accepted into the inaugural session of Startup Summer offered by Tech, taking advantage of the funding and mentorship provided through the program. Rachel has also co-founded another company, Sucette, which features intuitive infant care products. So that's two companies she's founded, and she's still in college.

Slide 8: Momentum in Tech Square

Students, faculty and staff are creating start-ups. Georgia Tech also fosters start-ups through programs like ATDC, part of EI². Since launching in 2003, Tech Square has become one of the country's premier research and innovation centers. The momentum has continued this past year as large companies take advantage of the resources and innovative environment. The synergy as they partner with small firms and startups is impressive. The latest additions include the Southern Company, Home Depot, Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE), and Worldpay along with AT&T Mobility and NCR. These large-company "innovation centers" also allow them to interact with the talent and expertise that exist at Georgia Tech in our students, faculty and staff, and all benefit. (Tell Home Depot story)

Slide 9: Community Engagement

One of Georgia Tech's deeply imbedded values is community engagement. You might have seen on the news last fall that Georgia Tech will offer automatic acceptance and four-year in-state tuition scholarships to all Atlanta Public Schools valedictorians and salutatorians. This initiative will increase exposure and access to Georgia Tech for

APS' most prepared students. Many of our students volunteer in the Atlanta Public School System.

We're all about finding solutions not just for far-away places that face challenges, but also those here in our own backyard. I'm proud to say that Georgia Tech students reach out beyond our campus to put their skills and passions to use close to home.

Georgia Tech is a founding partner of the Atlanta Science Festival, which attracted more than 30,000 visitors this spring.

Slide 10: Close

Twice a year, the Georgia Tech Advisory Board (GTAB) meets to weigh in on a subject that impacts the Institute in consequential ways. When we convened this past weekend, our theme was "Student Leadership Development." We are very fortunate to have a group of successful business and governmental leaders from all over the world who come to share their expertise with us. I often tell them that we couldn't ever afford to pay them as consultants, and this is a good way to get their invaluable insight for free!

On Sunday, our opening night, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President Hala Modellmog addressed the gathering and talked about Georgia Tech as a catalyst for a more prosperous and vibrant Metro Atlanta, including attracting business and industry, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and attracting the best and brightest to our area.

You, too, are among the best and the brightest. You're young professionals, engaged in the community, and giving back. You are the future of our city. Thank you for your commitment to our community.

Now, I would like to hear from you.